

Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development**Grants to Named Recipients (AS 37.05.316)****Grant Recipient: Anchorage Park Foundation****Federal Tax ID: 412205907****Project Title:****Project Type: Planning and Research**

Anchorage Park Foundation - Alaska Long Trail

Anchorage to Mat-Su Reconnaissance Study

State Funding Requested: \$300,000**House District: Anchorage Areawide (12-28)**

One-Time Need

Brief Project Description:

Reconnaissance Studies with AK Department of Transportation and Chugach State Park to Connect Anchorage to the Alaska Long Trail

Funding Plan:

Total Project Cost: \$300,000

Funding Already Secured: (\$0)

FY2023 State Funding Request: (\$300,000)

Project Deficit: \$0

*Funding Details:**Reconnaissance study needed to help get projects to shovel-ready for federal funding opportunities***Detailed Project Description and Justification:**

There is currently no safe, enjoyable way for walkers and bikers to travel between Anchorage and the Mat Su Borough. Providing trail connections between these areas -- Alaska's two largest population centers -- would bring real benefits to residents and visitors in both locations as well as providing a key segment of the Alaska Long Trail, the proposed 500 mile trail connecting Seward and Fairbanks.

This project will take the first step in making these connections, by bringing together landowners and stakeholders to investigate the benefits, costs and feasibility of different trail options. A leading candidate route would parallel the Glenn Highway, filling the 8-mile gap from where existing paved bike trail ends at Mirror Lake to northern boundary of the Municipality of Anchorage. The trail that ends at Mirror Lake is an extension of the Ship Creek Trail, which starts in Anchorage's downtown, passes through the Mountain View neighborhood, and then continues north along the Glenn Hwy through Eagle River. Because the Long Trail is planned to be a braided trail system, including hiking, biking and motorized segments, there may be alternative or additional other trail routes that could meet these trail connection goals. These options will also be investigated through this project, working with willing landowners and stakeholders.

Parties to involve in this process include, but are not limited to, Alaska Department of Transportation, Chugach State Park, Alaska Railroad, Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge managers, Eklutna, Inc., Native Village of Eklutna, Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation, Mat-Su Parks and Recreation, the Matanuska Susitna Borough, and trail advocates like the Mat Su Trails and Anchorage Park Foundation. All have indicated a willingness to come together with engineers to map a path forward for this narrow gap connecting Alaska's two most populated areas, Anchorage and the Matanuska Susitna

Valley.

Working with communities and stakeholders in the area will be a very important part of this project. The Native Village of Eklutna is located within the boundaries of the Municipality of Anchorage but is not connected to Anchorage trails nor north to the Mat-Su. Neighborhoods in Chugiak are also not connected. This trail project would also benefit two schools in the Anchorage School District. Chugiak Elementary School and Mirror Lake Middle School are the two schools that cannot participate in Bike to School Day (Alaska ranks sixth in the nation for the total number of participating schools per state). In addition to improving the connections between these north Anchorage communities, this trail could provide new ways to reach into Chugach State Park.

This is a regional need and a recreation and tourism amenity that is embraced by the communities along the Alaska Long Trail.

This critical reconnaissance study must be performed to DOT/PF standards to identify permits needed, a preferred route plan, and a clearer cost estimate for construction. The connection project is part of the Areawide Trails plan, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and follows portions of the Iditarod National Historic Trail.

Project Timeline:

2022 Reconnaissance Study with State Department of Transportation and Chugach State Park and other stakeholders

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

State Department of Transportation

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

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Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? ☐ Yes ☒ No